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of Jesus

The Virginal Spouse
of Mary

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The Foster Father of Jesus
The Virginal Spouse of Mary

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Abbas Coadjutor Im. Conceptionis

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Clyde, Missouri

St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and true spouse of Mary ever virgin, pray for us.

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PART I

The Dignity, Sanctity and Glory of St. Joseph

Prophetic Words of the 16th Century

ISIDORE of Isolanis, a pious Dominican of the 16th century who cherished great devotion to St. Joseph, wrote a learned book in his honor, entitled "Summary of St. Joseph." In it he distinctly prophesied the magnitude of devotion to St. Joseph in our days. Referring to the scriptural passage: "The Lord his God is with him, and the sound of the victory of the king in him" (Num. xxiii. 21), the author says: "These words signify the rejoicing which will once thrill the Church Militant, and the sound of victory which will be heard therein when the faithful recognize the sanctity of St. Joseph. The Holy Ghost will not cease to incite the hearts of the Christian people, until the

whole kingdom of the Church Militant, full of joy, *will impart a new lustre to the veneration of St. Joseph who is so near to God.* The Lord will let his light shine, He will lift the veil, and great men will search out the interior gifts of God that are hidden in St. Joseph; they will find in him a priceless treasure, the like of which they had never found in other saints of the Old Testament. We are inclined to believe that towards the end of time God will overwhelm St. Joseph with glorious honors. If in the past ages, during the storms of persecution, these honors could not be shown to St. Joseph, we must conclude that they have been reserved for later times. *At some future time the feast of St. Joseph will be celebrated as one of the greatest of feasts.* The Vicar of Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will order this feast to be celebrated in the Universal Church."

These prophetic words were literally fulfilled during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Pope Pius IX, the great Pope of Mary, placed a new gem also in the brilliant crown of St. Joseph, to whom he was singularly devoted. One of the first acts of his pontificate was to extend

to the whole Church the feast of the Patronge of St. Joseph (1847). On December 8, 1870, he solemnly declared the holy patriarch St. Joseph the *Patron of the Universal Church,* and enjoined that his feast, March 19, should thenceforth be celebrated as a double of the first class. Following in the footsteps of their saintly predecessor, Popes Leo XIII and Pius X showed an equal desire to add their own jewel to the crown of St. Joseph. Leo XIII granted permission for the recitation of the votive office of St. Joseph on certain days, and Pius X, on March 18, 1909, approved the Litany of St. Joseph. Later the same pontiff raised the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph to a solemnity with an octave. This feast is celebrated yearly on the Wednesday following the second Sunday after Easter.

May we not be very thankful that the flower of this devotion to St. Joseph has come into fullest bloom in our own time? Let us then zealously venerate St. Joseph, as Holy Church desires us to do. He is a powerful protector, a patron in every state of life.

St. Joseph's Position in the Plan of Redemption

From all eternity God had decreed that His only-begotten Son should become man; that He should be born of the Virgin Mary, and that St. Joseph should be the virginal spouse of the Mother of God and the foster father of her Divine Son. St. Joseph was thereby entrusted with a mission surpassing that of all other saints, yes, even that of the angels. The mission of St. Joseph was directly connected with the Mystery of the Incarnation, while the mission of St. John the Baptist, of the apostles and the other saints was concerned only with the salvation of souls, the *fruits* of the Incarnation. *St. Joseph, therefore, occupies the first place after Mary in the plan of Redemption.* The veneration we render him is called "Protodulia," the highest after the veneration of Mary; whilst the veneration of Mary is called "Hyperdulia," a veneration by far surpassing that given to any saint or angel. Consequently, the devotion to St. Joseph ranks higher than the devotion to all angels and saints, and is more pleasing to God.

St. Joseph's Position in the Church

Christ is the life of the Church, which forms His Mystical Body, and of the individual members thereof, as St. Paul says, "Christ . . . is your life" (Col. iii. 4). From eternity God had chosen Mary, not only to be the natural Mother of the natural Body of the Son of God, but also to be the Mother of His Mystical Body, the Church, and of each of its members.

Now, as St. Joseph filled his special, active mission in the Mystery of the Incarnation as the protector and foster father of Jesus Christ, so God appointed him also for the same office in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and for every individual member thereof. As St. Joseph was the foster father of Our Lord, and supported Him by the work of his hands, so by his powerful intercession in heaven before the throne of God, *he is the foster father of the Church and of every Christian.* As St. Joseph rescued the Infant Savior from the hands of Herod, and protected Him in Egypt, so is he, even now, *the powerful patron of the Church and of the faithful,* rescuing and protecting his charges in dangers, in time of need and persecution.

After Mary, St. Joseph holds the *first* place in protecting the Church and its members, and in this regard also, *the highest veneration*, the "Protodulia," *is due to him.*

This is the dogmatic foundation of devotion to St. Joseph. God Himself has thus ordained. Should we then hesitate? No! Let us practice devotion to St. Joseph with firm faith and unshaken confidence in his power and goodness, as well as in the office with which God entrusted him for the welfare of Christianity and for our salvation. "*Ite ad Joseph* – Go to Joseph!"

The Dignity of St. Joseph

With regard to the exalted dignity of St. Joseph, let us consider the following points: —

1. *St. Joseph was truly the spouse of the Blessed Virgin.* There existed a true, virginal marriage between Joseph and Mary; this, according to the teaching of theologians, is an article of faith. This marriage took place previous to the Incarnation of the Son of God, and was ordained by God for the purpose of protecting the good name of the Blessed Virgin.

In truth, Joseph was the husband of Mary and possessed all the rights of a virginal spouse. St. John Damascene says that God thereby bestowed so great a dignity on St. Joseph that human tongue cannot express it. The words "Spouse of Mary," comprise everything that can be said to the glory of St. Joseph. No other among the children of men ever possessed so lofty a dignity.

In his encyclical, "Quamquam pluries," Pope Leo XIII declares: "Certain it is that the dignity of the Mother of God is so great, that after God there can be nothing more exalted. As St. Joseph was united to the Blessed Virgin by the bond of matrimony, there is no doubt that he approached the exalted dignity of Mary more nearly than any other creature."

St. Bernard cries out: "How great must not that man be whom the only-begotten of the Most High chose as the lord and protector of His virginal Mother, as His own foster father, and as His assistant in the fulfilment of His greatest work, the Redemption of mankind!"

2. To St. Joseph was likewise given the name "Father of Jesus," and he was looked

upon as such by his contemporaries. "Jesus being as it was supposed, the Son of Joseph" (Luke iii. 23); "Is not this the Son of Joseph?" (John vi. 42.) However, St. Joseph was styled thus not only by the Jews who did not know the Mystery of the Incarnation, but the Blessed Mother herself said to Jesus, "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing" (Luke ii. 48). *Therefore the name "Father of Christ" was bestowed upon St. Joseph by Divine ordinance.*

In the above mentioned encyclical, Pope Leo XIII says further: "St. Joseph, in his all-surpassing dignity, is above all the saints, because he was, according to the will of the Most High, the guardian of the Son of God and in the eyes of men, His father."

3. Having received the name "Father of Christ," St. Joseph at the same time assumed the rights and duties connected with this name. With regard to our Divine Savior, St. Joseph possessed all the sentiments of a father, the solicitude of a father, the authority of a father. St. John Damascene says, "God appointed St. Joseph to take His place as father of Jesus. St.

Joseph willingly took upon himself the duties of a father towards Our Savior, and our Divine Lord surrendered Himself entirely and with filial confidence to his paternal care."

Another reason for St. Joseph's participation in the rights of a parent towards Our Lord is that in every family there is a common possession of goods, and as St. Joseph was the rightful husband of Mary, who was the true Mother of Jesus, he also shared with her the right of possessing and disposing of her Divine Son.

4. *St. Joseph, as head of the family, was the superior of Mary, and of Jesus in His human nature.* St. Paul says, "The husband is the head of the wife" (Eph. v. 23). Mary recognized St. Joseph as her superior in all things that did not pertain to the knowledge of God's mysteries and the special graces with which she had been privileged; and she, therefore, showed him due respect and submission.

Mary was subject to St. Joseph in all exterior and domestic affairs; for to him belonged the duty of caring for the family. Our Divine Savior, too, exercised a filial obedience towards St. Joseph, whereby the

great dignity of His foster father was likewise made manifest.

5. By his association with Jesus and Mary in the Mystery of the Incarnation, St. Joseph became a member of the order of the Hypostatic Union, which rises supreme above all orders of angels and of men because it includes the Eternal Son of God made man. Only three persons compose this sovereign order: *Jesus*, the God-man, *Mary*, His virginal mother, and *Joseph*, the true spouse of Mary and the reputed father of Jesus. By virtue of this privilege, St. Joseph transcends in dignity all other saints, both of the Old and the New Testament; yes, he is superior — not in nature but in dignity — to the angels themselves, for all the orders of the angels are subject to that of the Hypostatic Union.

The Sanctity of St. Joseph

God assigns to every person a degree of sanctity fitting the position in life to which he has been called. The dignity and the position of St. Joseph was of so sublime a nature that the highest degree of sanctity and virtue was required to be worthy of it.

Even before his espousal to Mary, the

Holy Ghost called St. Joseph a "just man" (Matt. i. 19), and in consideration of his virtues, the priests of the temple, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, entrusted the Blessed Virgin to his care. Moreover, according to a pious tradition in the Church he made the vow of virginity in his early youth and ever preserved it intact.

After his chaste espousal, a mighty impetus was given to his sanctity, so that thenceforth he led a truly heavenly life on earth. After the birth of Christ his perfection rose still higher. He was vouchsafed a deep, interior knowledge of the Divine mysteries. The continuous presence and companionship of Our Savior excited in St. Joseph frequent and ardent acts of love; the words and example of Jesus exercised a powerful influence over him, so that he increased constantly in grace. And during all that time Our Lord inundated him with His Divine favors; for, if He rewards even a cup of cold water given to a thirsty person in His Name, how much more would He reward the constant services of St. Joseph bestowed upon Himself!

Mary, likewise, obtained for her virginal spouse an abundance of graces for

his sanctification. It is an acknowledged truth that the most effectual means for obtaining graces from God is devotion to Mary, because of the power of her intercession. To what degree of sanctity did not St. Joseph then attain, who was so deeply devoted to Mary and whom the Blessed Virgin loved so tenderly!

The great faith and the obedience of St. Joseph were, moreover, made manifest by his conduct on the several occasions when difficult commands were communicated to him by the angels. From the Gospels it is apparent that he willingly did as directed; he obeyed at the least sign and joyfully underwent all trials which the command entailed.

Many learned theologians hold the same opinion as that expressed by an angelic lover of the Holy Eucharist, Blessed Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament. "I believe," she said, "that the Holy Trinity prepared St. Joseph from his very birth for the sublime office for which he had been destined; that he was sanctified in his mother's womb as were the Prophet Jeremias and St. John the Baptist; that he always led a just life and was guided by the Holy Spirit; and

that he never held intercourse with the world or fostered a merely natural friendship. The Holy Trinity protected him against the corruption of the world. By virtue of an infused light, he was versed in every art; but his humility prevented him from engaging in any other work except the lowly trade of a carpenter.

"With the exception of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph was better instructed and more enlightened in Divine things than any other person on earth. His prerogatives as far surpassed those of the other saints as his dignity of foster father of Jesus and spouse of the Blessed Virgin surpassed in holiness and sublimity that of all other men. Next to Jesus and Mary, he was the most perfect in soul and body."

St. Joseph's Supreme Glory in Heaven

On earth St. Joseph surpassed all the saints in dignity and sanctity, and lived in intimate union with Jesus and Mary. May we not confidently believe then that in heaven he enjoys the highest glory after Mary and *is enthroned above the apostles and the choirs of angels*, in the same order as Jesus and Mary?

Once on the feast of the Annunciation St. Gertrude had a vision during which the Heavenly Mother revealed to her the glory of her spouse St. Joseph, in order to awaken in the saint a greater love for him and to encourage her to have confidence in his intercession. Of this vision St. Gertrude wrote: "I saw heaven opened and St. Joseph sitting upon a magnificent throne. I felt myself wonderfully affected, when, each time his name was mentioned, all the saints made a profound inclination toward him, showing by the serenity and sweetness of their looks that they rejoiced with him on account of his exalted dignity."

Such, then, in brief, is the dignity, sanctity and glory of St. Joseph. Inexpressibly great, therefore, is his intercession in heaven; inexpressibly great is also his love for us, his charges here on earth. For this reason let us place boundless confidence in him in all the affairs of life. "Ite ad Joseph, — *Go to Joseph!*" the faithful are admonished by Holy Church, by the Vicar of Christ. St. Joseph gives his aid in every necessity to those who invoke him with fervor and confidence.

PART II

Devotion to St. Joseph

AMONG all the stars which shine with brilliant splendor in the galaxy of the saints in heaven, assuredly there is none more beautiful nor more resplendent than the virginal spouse of the holy Mother of God — the great St. Joseph. As the foster father of Jesus and the spouse of the Virgin-Mother, he enjoys a splendor all his own, and hence a power of intercession far above every other saint. Who is there, excepting only the Blessed Virgin, who can plead with Jesus more effectually than St. Joseph? For if the Son of God was obedient to him during His earthly life, will He not now delight to hearken with a special readiness to the pleadings which St. Joseph offers in behalf of those who have recourse to his intercession? To this great saint we may, then, with a firm confidence address our petitions, for *his noble, fatherly heart is aware of every*

form of human need and is eager to procure alleviation in every sorrow.

The chaste Joseph of the Old Testament was a prototype of St. Joseph, the foster father of Our Lord. Pharaoh raised him from his humble position in life to the highest dignity in the land, and directed all his subjects to apply to Joseph in their needs, saying, "Ite ad Joseph! — *Go to Joseph!*" (Gen. xli. 55.)

In the same words, Holy Church directs the faithful to have recourse to St. Joseph in all their spiritual and temporal necessities. And as Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, continually remains with His Church and directs it through the Holy Spirit, we may truly say that Christ, that the Holy Ghost, that *the Most Blessed Trinity, desires and requests the faithful to venerate St. Joseph devoutly.*

Indeed, there is scarcely another saint to whom we feel more powerfully drawn than to St. Joseph. *To him we may go with the same confidence and trust as to a tender, loving father.* We may cling to him and feel as secure as did the Divine Child when resting in his arms.

The Blessed Virgin Urges Veneration of St. Joseph

The Blessed Virgin desires most earnestly that the faithful cherish great devotion toward her holy spouse. Father Alvarez, of the Society of Jesus, was admonished by the Heavenly Mother to choose St. Joseph as his special patron, and for this reason the members of the Jesuit Order dedicate themselves to St. Joseph every year on the feast of his solemnity. St. Teresa was particularly rewarded by the Blessed Virgin for spreading devotion to St. Joseph.

A remarkable revelation was made by the Mother of God to Ven. Mary of Agreda, to whom she said: "The children of the world are ignorant regarding the privileges and rights which the Most High has conferred on my holy spouse, and the power of his intercession with the Divine Majesty and with me. But I assure you, my daughter, that in heaven he is most intimate with the Lord, and has great power to avert the punishment of Divine justice from sinners. *In all trials seek his intercession because the Heavenly Father will grant whatever my spouse asks.*"

Testimonies of Various Saints

St. Alphonsus Liguori

In order to encourage the faithful to honor St. Joseph, St. Alphonsus Liguori cites these words of St. Teresa: "The holy example of Jesus Christ who, while upon earth, honored St. Joseph so highly and was obedient to him during His life, should be sufficient to inflame the hearts of all with devotion to this great saint."

The holy Doctor says further: "Since we all must die, we should cherish a special devotion to St. Joseph that he may obtain for us a happy death. All Christians regard him as the advocate of the dying who assists at the hour of death those who honored him during their life, and that for three reasons: —

"First, because Jesus Christ loved him not only as a friend, but as a father; and on this account his mediation is far more efficacious than that of any other saint.

"Second, because St. Joseph has obtained special power against the evil spirits, who tempt us with redoubled vigor at the hour of death.

"Third, the assistance given St. Joseph

at his death by Jesus and Mary obtained for him the right to secure a holy and peaceful death for his servants. Hence, if they invoke him at the hour of death *he will not only help them, but he will also obtain for them the assistance of Jesus and Mary.*"

St. Thomas of Aquin

The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, declares: "Some saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage with particular efficacy in certain needs, but not in others; but our holy patron, St. Joseph, has the power to assist us *in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking.*"

St. Bernardine of Siena

"If you compare St. Joseph to the whole Church of Christ," says St. Bernardine, "is he not the special and chosen being by whom and under whom the Lord was introduced into the world with becoming dignity? If all the faithful are debtors to the Virgin Mother for being made worthy through her to receive the Redeemer, there can be no doubt that next to the Mother of God we owe to St. Joseph our special homage and veneration."

The words of St. Teresa with reference to devotion to St. Joseph are so eminently worthy of consideration that we insert a lengthy passage from her life. During an illness in which no earthly physician could give her relief, the saint determined to implore the blessed in heaven to restore her health. She writes: "I chose for my patron and lord the glorious St. Joseph, and I recommended myself earnestly to him. I saw that, both from this my present trouble, and from those of greater consequence relating to my honor and the loss of my soul, this my father and lord delivered me and rendered me greater services than I knew how to ask for. *I do not remember that I have ever asked him at any time for anything which he did not obtain for me.* It fills me with amazement when I consider the numberless graces which God has granted me through the intercession of this blessed saint, and the perils, both of body and soul, from which he has delivered me.

"To other saints the Most High seems to have given grace to succor men in some special necessity, but this glorious saint, I know by experience, has power to help

us in *all.* Our Lord wishes us to understand by this, that as He Himself was subject to St. Joseph while on earth, recognizing in him the authority of foster father and guardian, so now in heaven He is pleased to grant all his requests. This is what others have also experienced whom I have counselled to commend themselves to this incomparable protector. Knowing by so long an experience St. Joseph's astonishing influence with God, I would wish to persuade everyone to honor him with particular devotion. I have always seen those who honored him in a special manner make progress in virtue, for this heavenly protector favors in a striking manner the spiritual advancement of souls who commend themselves to him. For several years I have been accustomed to ask some favor on his feast, and I have always received it. If the petition be in any way amiss, he directs it aright for my greater welfare. If anyone does not believe it I beg of him, for the love of God, to make the trial. He will see by experience how advantageous it is to commend himself to this glorious saint and to honor him with particular devotion.

"Those who are devoted to prayer should, in a special manner, cherish devotion to St. Joseph. I know not how anyone can ponder on the sufferings, trials and tribulations the Queen of angels endured whilst caring for Jesus in His childhood, without at the same time thanking St. Joseph for the services he rendered the Divine Child and His Blessed Mother. Let him who cannot find anyone to teach him to pray, choose this glorious saint for his master, and he will not stray from the right path."

The Month of St. Joseph

It has long been the praiseworthy custom of pious Christians to dedicate the month of March to St. Joseph. Since the time Pope Pius IX named St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, and Popes Leo XIII and Pius X by special encyclicals so urgently recommended devotion to him, in particular for the month of March, the veneration of this great saint has been practiced with ever increasing fervor.

Pope Pius IX granted an indulgence of 300 days for each day to all the faithful who offer prayers or perform other acts of

piety in honor of St. Joseph during the month of March. Pious custom also dedicates Wednesday of each week to the honor of St. Joseph.

Feasts of St. Joseph

Besides dedicating the month of March to St. Joseph, Holy Church shows her supreme love and veneration for her heavenly patron by the annual celebration of two feasts in his honor.

On March 19th she solemnly commemorates the death of St. Joseph, which according to tradition occurred on that day, and exhorts her children to invoke him in particular as the patron of a happy death. On the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, celebrated each year on the Wednesday following the second Sunday after Easter, she venerates St. Joseph particularly as the Spouse of the Virgin Mary and the Patron of the Universal Church. The dignity of this feast is enhanced by an octave, which means that during the week following, the Mass and Office of St. Joseph are repeated daily unless a feast intervenes, in which case a commemoration is made of St. Joseph in the Mass and Office.

PART III

The Patronage of St. Joseph

THE patronage of St. Joseph extends to all walks and conditions of life, for, as witnessed by St. Teresa, God has given him power to lend his assistance in *every necessity*. Besides being the glorious patron of the Universal Church, he is, as we have already said, the fatherly guardian and protector of every Christian.

In order the better to understand in what degree St. Joseph may justly be called our patron and protector, and to strengthen our confidence in his aid, let us consider the following questions: 1. What is meant by being a patron? 2. What must the client do? 3. How does St. Joseph fulfil his office as patron and protector?

What is Meant by Being a Patron?

Generally speaking, three things are required of a patron: *First, he should realize the needs, the dangers and the sufferings of him who is placed under his*

protection. How could he give his aid in trouble if he had no knowledge of it? How could he avert a danger of which he was ignorant? If we apply this to St. Joseph, and cast a glance at his life on earth, we see at once that he knows from his own experience the sufferings and trials, the miseries and difficulties of the children of earth.

The second requisite of a patron is power. He must have at his disposal the means to supply the needs of those who are under his protection, to assuage their grief by consolations. And who could have any doubt as to St. Joseph's great power? To put it briefly: he rejoices in the name of father with regard to Him who is almighty in His nature; he rejoices in the name of spouse with regard to her who is all-powerful in her intercession. Greater and more exalted claims for having his petitions granted can be presented by no other saint in heaven.

The third requisite of a protector is kindness and willingness to use his power in favor of the one who seeks his aid. Need we ask whether St. Joseph has a kind heart? After the Mother of God, he has

the most compassionate of hearts, a heart formed after the Heart of Jesus Itself. St. Joseph derived the fulness of his kind-heartedness from the years of intimate intercourse with Jesus and Mary. It were sinful to doubt his goodness or his sympathy with our needs. This would grieve not only him, but Jesus and Mary as well.

What Must the Client Do?

What is required of him who venerates St. Joseph as his patron? *First, that he present to his heavenly protector his troubles, his needs and sorrows.* This rule must be observed even in regard to God. "Everyone that asketh receiveth" (Luke xi. 10); "Ask and ye shall receive" (John xvi. 24). These utterances of Jesus Christ are familiar to everyone. God desires that we petition Him, and the saints require it also. Go, therefore, to the image, to the altar, to the church of St. Joseph, and in prayer lay before him your troubles and fears.

Secondly, it is required that he who seeks aid should have confidence in his heavenly protector. Can this be a difficult matter with regard to St. Joseph? Has he not aided thousands of others? Has he not

given his assistance in affairs more hopeless than ours?

Thirdly, it is required that the client show himself grateful towards his patron and protector for the benefits received. The returning of thanks gives one a right to new favors and blessings. Could we be so ungrateful as to neglect to thank St. Joseph from the depths of our heart for the favors we have received from him in the past? Let us offer him in thanksgiving the proofs of gratitude which Jesus and Mary ever manifested toward him on earth and now manifest perpetually in heaven.

How Does St. Joseph Fulfil His Office of Patron and Protector?

Never has any saint more faithfully or perfectly fulfilled the office of patron and protector than St. Joseph.

Before all, St. Joseph was the protector of the holy Mother of God and of the Child Jesus. God the Father, in committing to St. Joseph these, His most precious treasures, gave him preference over all the blessed spirits of heaven. And St. Joseph received these two sacred persons into his care, to be their faithful protector, their

guardian and defender. In the litany of St. Joseph we therefore pray: *Chaste protector of the Virgin, Christ's valiant defender, pray for us.* Through him Jesus and Mary were spared many hardships and dangers; by St. Joseph they were provided with the necessaries of life. And with what charity, wisdom and perseverance did he not respond to his twofold mission of patron and protector! Let us briefly review also some of the other important charges committed to the patronage of St. Joseph.

Patron of the Universal Church

Although it was not until the 19th century that St. Joseph was given the title of *Patron of the Universal Church* by the Vicar of Christ, Pope Pius IX, in reality he exercised this sublime office from the very beginning. He became patron of the whole Mystical Body of Christ from the moment that he was made patron and protector of Jesus and Mary. As the Church took its beginning from Jesus Christ, who was its Divine Founder, and Mary and Joseph were the first members of the Church, St. Joseph, being the head of the

Holy Family, was likewise the protector, the head of the Church. And if he filled this office toward the Church at its birth, he did not cease to exercise it as the Church grew and was spread throughout the world.

God alone knows how much distress and how many dangers have been and are constantly averted from the Church through the intercession of St. Joseph. In our days the Church is being attacked and threatened on all sides. Let us invoke with confidence her mighty guardian and protector. Assuredly, St. Joseph will watch over her as he watched over the Holy Family; and as he aided Jesus and Mary in all their needs and rescued them from danger, so also he will aid the Church in her conflict with her enemies.

The Guardian and Protector of All Classes of Christians

The Ven. Mother Magdalen of St. Joseph, one of the first of the Carmelites of St. Teresa's Reform, said: "As it pleased God that St. Joseph should take the place of father to His only Son, He gave him in consequence a grace of paternity toward all men, made him incline all his thoughts and

all his affections toward them, and moves him to procure for them as much good as could the tenderest of fathers for his children." St. Joseph, then, is our patron, and more than our patron; he is our *father*, even as he was the protector and father of Jesus. For Jesus, in assuming our nature, made us His brethren, and in adopting St. Joseph as His father, He made him necessarily our father also, and desires with all the love of His Sacred Heart that we should consider him as such.

St. Joseph is the patron of all classes of human society. He is the patron of *families*, since he was the head of the Holy Family. He is the patron of the *poor*, since he voluntarily embraced and followed a life of poverty. He is the patron of *laborers*, as the workshop of Nazareth testified for so many years. He is the patron of the *rich* who seek a better inheritance, since he held in his possession for nearly thirty years the true riches, and now in heaven possesses the key of God's treasury. He is the patron of the *suffering*, of *travelers*, of *exiles*, of the *afflicted*, of the *dying*. He is the patron of the *married*, and he is the patron of *virgins*. But above all, we

might say, he is the patron of *priests*. The whole office of the priest repeats and reflects that of St. Joseph, not in figure only, but in many ways literally. To the priest, as to St. Joseph, the Son of God becomes obedient. The priest is privileged to touch and to bear in his hands the same Word-made-flesh whom St. Joseph so reverently bore in his arms.

Numberless confraternities are dedicated to this benign protector; societies of laborers and tradesmen flourish under his patronage; sodalities of youths and maidens have enrolled themselves under his banner. Everywhere churches and altars are erected to his honor; everywhere his feasts are celebrated with solemnity and splendor. From all parts of the world, fervent petitions daily ascend to St. Joseph, and he who is all-powerful over the Heart of Jesus, pours down graces and blessings on struggling mankind. Whenever the names of Jesus and Mary are pronounced by the faithful, the name of Joseph is also heard. With these three holy names, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, on their lips or in their hearts, thousands of Christians daily yield up their souls into the hands of their Creator.

Model and Patron of Laborers

"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. iii. 19). Thus God spoke to Adam, and as long as the world exists no one will be able to evade this law. To labor is man's lot upon earth. Yet man, in his pride, is wont to regard labor as being beneath his dignity and to evade it as much as possible. Indeed, at various times of the world's history, labor was looked upon as the sole portion of slaves and menials and this view gains predominance whenever men lose sight of the sublime example of the Son of God and their eternal destiny.

In the humble home of a laborer, Jesus, the Son of God, passed His days until He attained His thirtieth year. There at the side of His foster father, He spent the days of His youth and early manhood in humble, laborious toil. Only three years He devoted to His public life of teaching, completing His great work of Redemption on the Cross.

And St. Joseph, working hand in hand with his Divine Foster Son, is truly the most perfect model and the most fitting patron of those who are compelled to earn their living by the labor of their hands.

St. Joseph well knew who it was that worked at his side; he knew that Jesus was the Son of God, the Word by whom all things were made, the Word that preserved, sustained and ruled all things, the Word of the Eternal Father. But did he on that account lay aside his plane and say to Jesus: "Son of the living God, why should I labor and earn Thy bread and mine by weariness and toil? Thou art Almighty, Thou dost nourish, clothe and preserve all things that exist: transform this cottage into a palace and let poverty give way to wealth and grandeur." To entertain such a thought would be blasphemous. No, St. Joseph had no desire for the riches and honors of this world. He desired no other honor than that of serving God by a hidden laborious life.

The humble St. Joseph worked on silently, in patience and resignation, for Jesus and with Jesus. He was aware of God's decree that the Savior of mankind should be like unto man in all things, sin excepted, and that He must in consequence endure sufferings and hardships which are the punishment of sin. Among such hardships we must reckon labor. Our Savior

subjected Himself to labor. *He desired to take from it the ignominy which clung to it, He desired to ennoble, to sanctify and to elevate it.*

St. Joseph labored industriously from early morning until late in the evening for the maintenance of the Holy Family. He was not disheartened if the sun poured down its burning rays upon him, if the perspiration fell thick and fast from his brow, if his weary limbs demanded rest, if the masters for whom he worked made unreasonable demands and treated him unkindly, yea, unjustly; if he saw the rich spend their time in luxury and idleness, if he found himself disregarded and despised as a common laborer.

He toiled because his duties required it, because God willed it; because Jesus and Mary were dependent upon his labors, because Jesus Himself labored with him. *One glance at his Divine Foster Son made all his work sweet and gave him new strength and courage.* Never were his labors marred by ill humor, dissatisfaction, murmuring or complaint against Divine Providence, for he did not wish to become rich or lead a life of ease or laziness.

St. Joseph Desired No Other State of Life

St. Joseph did not envy those who were rich or of a superior rank. Perfectly content that God had destined him to labor, *he desired no other kind of life.* Regardless of the fact that in his veins flowed the royal blood of David, the holy carpenter was perfectly resigned to his lowly condition. At his labors he practiced the most sublime virtues of humility and meekness, of patience, obedience and self-denial.

No doubt it would have pleased him to see his Divine Foster Son and his beloved Spouse in better circumstances, to offer them a more comfortable home, and many a time it must have pained him to see Jesus perform such hard work, to see the Savior of the world and His Blessed Mother eat the bread which they had to earn by the sweat of their brow. However, St. Joseph was resigned, he knew it was the will of God that it should be thus, he knew that Jesus and Mary desired nothing better.

Satisfied with his vocation, he strove like Jesus to sanctify his work. As Jesus wished to glorify His Heavenly Father by the menial work of a carpenter, so also did St. Joseph. Every movement of his hand,

every time he used a tool, all was accomplished with the intention to honor God, to fulfil His holy will. He commenced his work with prayer, he accompanied it with prayer, yea his work itself, because sanctified by a good intention, was a prayer. Thus his every action was good, was God-pleasing, and from day to day, from hour to hour, he became richer in merit, richer in grace.

When the week was ended, when the Sabbath, the day of rest, was at hand, Joseph's little cottage was verily transformed into a paradise. Then he could satisfy his heart's desire to hold sweet intercourse with God in holy contemplation; then he could refresh his spirit by the reading of Holy Scripture; then he could hear from the lips of Jesus the most sublime instructions; then he could converse with Jesus and Mary of heavenly things. *Oh, how he then returned thanks to God for the grace of his vocation!*

Imitate St. Joseph, all you who are born to a life of labor; choose him for your model and protector. If you follow him, you will find true peace and happiness on earth, and when days of misfortune

come upon you, you will find aid through his intercession. Finally, guided by his fatherly care, you will reach that place where there is no more labor, but where you may enjoy the fruits of work done in God and for God, and where you may rest from toil in the bosom of God with Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

A Rescuer of Sinners

Like the father of the prodigal son mentioned in the Gospel, St. Joseph loves not only those of his children who hear his voice and lead an innocent life; he is also concerned about his lost and erring sons. If with his strong hand he leads the just up the mountain of perfection, he is also, in his paternal goodness, very solicitous for poor sinners for whom his dearly beloved Foster Son gave his life.

The Blessed Virgin once said to Ven. Mary of Agreda: "On the day of judgment, the condemned will weep bitterly for not having realized how powerful and efficacious a means of salvation they might have had in the intercession of St. Joseph, and for not having done their utmost to gain the friendship of the Eternal Judge."

Truly, St. Joseph stretches out his hand to all who have fallen, if they but take refuge to him and invoke him. Father Isolanis cites a notable example of St. Joseph's solicitude for sinners.

A Venetian nobleman had the pious custom of praying daily before a picture of St. Joseph, but he was not particular about keeping the commandments of God. It happened that he fell ill. Day by day he grew worse. Great fears were entertained for his recovery, but still more for his soul, which was in a lamentable condition. When all hope of saving his life had been abandoned, a heavenly physician appeared. The sick nobleman suddenly saw an aged man in his room, who perfectly resembled the picture before which he daily prayed. The appearance of this heavenly visitor immediately dispelled all blindness from his soul, as a ray of sunlight disperses darkness. Deep compunction and sorrow for his sins filled his heart, and he made a sincere and contrite confession. The most remarkable grace that St. Joseph obtained for him was that at the moment the priest finished pronouncing the words of absolution, he yielded his soul, all cleansed from sin, into the hands of his Creator.

Numberless other examples might be mentioned to show that persons who for

years had led sinful lives, were truly converted because they had persevered in venerating St. Joseph. May this give sinners confidence in St. Joseph, and may they, by his hands, arise from their fallen state. It ought especially to inspire with confidence those who wish to bring a father, a brother, a husband, or any dear one, back again to the Faith or to a virtuous life. St. Joseph will lend them a helping hand.

Patron of the Sick

Who can count the numerous cures that have been obtained through the intercession of St. Joseph, in individual cases as well as in times of epidemics! Toward the middle of the last century there lived in the diocese of Paderborn, Prussia, a very pious priest who cherished a tender devotion to St. Joseph. Through the prayers of this priest and the confidence of those who invoked St. Joseph, thousands were restored to health, and from all directions the sick were brought to him. Another priest, desiring to write a book about St. Joseph, asked him for facts regarding the cures that had been wrought through the intercession of St. Joseph. On February

26, 1872, the priest author received the following lines: —

"**There is not a single so-called incurable disease, which God has not healed through the intercession of St. Joseph.** Not hundreds, but thousands have been cured through his intercession. More than fifty who were blind received their eyesight again. Many, a great many, who were suffering from cancer were healed. Persons who had been deaf were able to hear again, the dumb had their speech restored, paralytics who for years had been confined to their beds, recovered the use of their limbs. Among thousands who were afflicted with epilepsy, the number that were not cured was certainly less than ten. In fact, I could tell you of thousands of cures that have taken place here through the intercession of St. Joseph, in cases which had been pronounced incurable. I could write volumes on the wonderful cures God has effected these forty years through St. Joseph's intercession.

"I place my sole confidence in the merits of Jesus Christ and the intercession of St. Joseph. Many sick persons who did not come here were cured at home. I tell the Jews to pray the psalms; the Protestants to pray seven **Our Fathers**; Catholics, seven **Our Fathers** and **Hail Marys** in honor of St. Joseph, and these prayers they must offer for the souls in purgatory. Every

one must commend himself to my prayers. Usually, they are not cured immediately, but in a few days or weeks. The concourse of people was extraordinarily great in 1867, 1868, 1869 and 1870, until the beginning of the war, frequently not less than 10,000 in a week. — Ah, if I could speak to you personally, how many wonderful things I could relate that have occurred to me personally through St. Joseph's intercession!"

The pious priest requested that his name be withheld, for he made this known only for the honor and glory of God.

A Father to the Poor

Again and again the Church compares St. Joseph's position with that of Joseph of Egypt in the house of Pharaoh. We know that Joseph of Egypt was the generous benefactor of whole nations. How many people would have perished during the seven years of famine, had not Joseph through his wisdom and foresight provided that the superabundance of seven good years be stored away. Thus the king could satisfy all petitioners for food; he had merely to say: "Go to Joseph."

But to the glorious St. Joseph, God has

given still greater power to help the poor. How good and powerful St. Joseph is in this regard can be shown especially by the experiences of numerous convents and religious orders. Many who were poor themselves accomplished wonderful things by placing their trust in St. Joseph. With his aid they built churches, schools, convents and charitable institutions of every description. *How many instances could here be mentioned in which St. Joseph miraculously came to the aid of convents and religious communities in cases of dire poverty!* With his assistance, St. Teresa founded more than twenty convents.

One day this saint was in great perplexity because she had no money wherewith to pay the laborers, and she saw no way out of her embarrassment. Thereupon St. Joseph appeared to her and offered to go security for her and also to be her treasurer. He promised her that money should be at hand, induced her to make an agreement with the laborers regarding their wages and to continue the work with more energy than ever. Although St. Teresa had not a farthing, she nevertheless did as St. Joseph told her, and in so extraordi-

nary a manner did she receive aid, that all who knew of it were greatly astonished.

St. Joseph, however, aids not only the religious *but all the poor who take refuge to him with confidence.* Many examples are recorded in which he has come to the assistance of the poor and needy in a most wonderful manner. The poor should especially venerate and invoke St. Joseph when in trouble; he will not let their trust in him be confounded. While on earth, St. Joseph himself experienced the hardships of poverty, and therefore he is now so good and powerful a patron of the poor.

Patron of a Happy Death

It is an undeniable fact that St. Joseph is a special protector of the dying, and that he is most solicitous for his clients in their last agony. Numberless persons who practiced special devotion to St. Joseph during life have made this experience. At the hour of death, man is subject to untold suffering and anguish. At that supreme moment, every Christian must undergo a terrible trial, on the final decision of which depends eternal joy or endless woe. The fury of hell, the remembrance of past sins,

the uncertainty of the future, the pains of death, the terror of the judgment, — all these things flood the soul with sufferings. *What saint could defend it better than St. Joseph whom the whole Christian world acknowledges as the protector and patron of the dying!*

There are three reasons for St. Joseph's being a special patron of the dying. 1. He is the foster father of the Eternal Judge, who can refuse him nothing. 2. He is terrible to the demons; the Church calls him the conqueror of hell. 3. His own death was truly glorious; he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, and this is the principal reason for his being the patron of a happy death. It was revealed to a favored soul that for days before St. Joseph died, hosts of angels came down from heaven to console him, and to sing heavenly canticles; and that at the moment of his departure, the holy Archangels Gabriel and Michael, together with a host of other angels, came to receive his soul and to bear it to limbo, where he was to announce to his forefathers the glad tidings of the approaching Redemption. We can well imagine that Jesus poured out streams of

interior bliss and heavenly consolations upon His foster father in return for all he had done for Him. What love and solicitude the Blessed Virgin must have shown him! Both Jesus and Mary closed his eyes in death, both shed tears at his departure. If Jesus wept over Lazarus, how must He have wept over St. Joseph!

In the lives of the saints we read many examples of St. Joseph appearing to them at the hour of death. To many of them he appeared with the Blessed Virgin; again, he obtained for them the grace to die on his feast. A priest of the Order of the Sacred Heart always asked St. Joseph for the grace to die at the foot of the altar, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. This petition was granted. While kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, he yielded up his soul to God.

Wonderful examples could be mentioned also from the lives of many ordinary Christians, of how *St. Joseph obtained for them a happy hour of death* because during life they had prayed to him for this grace. Let us daily ask him to assist us at the hour of death and remind him of his own glorious death in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

An Inspiration from St. Joseph

A Jesuit missionary of Chili gives the following account of a deathbed conversion which he himself witnessed in 1881.

"On Holy Thursday while I was spending some time before the Blessed Sacrament, I was summoned to a sick man who for years had not been to confession, but had asked that a Capuchin or Jesuit Father be sent for. Scarcely had I arrived, when I was told that the man no longer wished to go to confession, and, moreover, he felt very weak and unable to make a confession.

"I perceived a sickening, pestilential odor coming from the adjoining room where he lay. I did not despair of saving his poor soul but waited and prayed that the Lord might show His infinite mercy to the dying man. From time to time I asked the persons who attended him to remind him that the priest was waiting outside, and begged them to entreat him to go to confession before his death. But the unfortunate man's only reply was, 'I will not go to confession.'

"An hour had passed, and the patient sent me word that he thanked me for my visit, but I might just as well return home. When first I was sent for I had prayed fervently to the Patron of the Universal Church, St. Joseph, imploring him not to permit this soul to be lost. I therefore placed full confidence in him as the patron

of the dying, and resolved to wait not only one, but two hours if necessary.

"The second hour had nearly passed. With renewed fervor I implored St. Joseph for the salvation of the unfortunate man, and the nearer he approached death the more fervent became my supplications. While I was praying, a thought suddenly flashed through my mind which I welcomed as an inspiration from St. Joseph. It seemed to me St. Joseph was showing me the reason for the sick man's long and obstinate refusal to go to confession. I called for holy water, approached the sick-chamber, and in the Name of the Blessed Trinity three times sprinkled the entrance and threshold with the blessed water, repeating each time the words: 'Depart from here, Satan, in the Name of Jesus Christ!'

"Scarcely had I pronounced these words the third time when the patient inquired of his daughter whether the priest had already gone. Upon learning that I was still there, he requested that I come to his bedside. As soon as he caught sight of me he exclaimed, 'My God, I thank Thee! O good God, I thank Thee!' At the same time he wept like a child.

"The pestilential odor had in the meantime disappeared. It was this odor and a few other striking circumstances which proved to me that the evil spirit had here exercised his influence.

"Soon afterwards I heard the dying man's confession. When I asked him if he would like to receive the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction the next day, he replied, 'No, not tomorrow, but today; otherwise it might be too late.' That evening at half past five he received the last Sacraments. He died at midnight. During the few hours preceding his death, the man continually made acts of love and resignation to the will of God. Those who surrounded his bed were greatly edified."

The missionary concluded his report by saying, "I have always believed in the goodness of St. Joseph and the efficacy of holy water, but never did I experience St. Joseph's goodness and the supernatural power of holy water so obviously as at this conversion."

Consoler and Liberator of the Poor Souls

Having been made Patron of the Universal Church, St. Joseph is the father and protector not only of the faithful upon earth, but also of the souls in purgatory, who are members of the Church Suffering. Assuredly his fatherly solicitude toward the poor souls is even more tender than that which he exercises toward the members

of the Church upon earth. St. Joseph, having experienced the heartrending sorrow of the three days' loss of the Child Jesus, as well as the exile of limbo, can well compassionate the pain and longing which the holy souls experience in their privation of the Beatific Vision of God. Can we believe that in the goodness and generosity of his devoted love he will remain indifferent to their sufferings? Ah, if Mary is the Mother of the poor souls, surely Joseph, her devoted and inseparable spouse, is also in a special way their kind and solicitous father. Like Mary, he will not fail to intercede for them, that they may soon be delivered from their torments and be admitted to the joys of heaven.

But if St. Joseph is the comforter of all the souls in purgatory, without doubt he exercises even greater solicitude toward those souls who during life practiced special devotion to him. Even as Joseph of Egypt showed special favor to his own brothers, by giving back the money they had brought to pay for the corn with which he supplied them, so also we may be certain that St. Joseph will employ the power of his intercession more particularly in

behalf of those souls who, as his dear children, honored and invoked him during their earthly exile.

A Conqueror of Hell

One of the greatest evils among Christians is their indifference to the snares of the evil one. The Blessed Virgin told Ven. Mary of Agreda to weep on account of the carelessness and indifference of Christians in this regard. Holy Scripture warns us saying: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" (Peter v. 8). — "Woe to the earth... because the devil is come down unto you having great wrath" (Apoc. xii. 12).

All the saints of God compassionate us on account of these battles in which we must engage. *Holy Church considers St. Joseph an especially powerful conqueror of hell* because he rescued the Infant Savior from the murderous hands of Herod. Herod was an image and tool of the devil in his persecution and ruination of souls. The glorious victory which St. Joseph gained over Satan, in the person of Herod, gives him great power over demons.

Origen remarks: The command which the angel gave St. Joseph to flee to Egypt conferred the power to banish all the evil spirits from that unfortunate country in which they had, so to speak, established the center of their glory. And truly, the moment St. Joseph entered Egypt with Jesus and Mary, the idols fell, the oracles were silent, the father of lies was fettered, and the infernal shadows vanished. These victories, it is true, must be attributed to the Divine Child, but to gain them, Our Lord wished to avail Himself of the instrumentality of His foster father, who as head of the family, as guide on the journey, as rescuer of the Savior of the world, occupied so important a position in this mystery. Already this defeat inspired Satan with great fear of the name, Joseph, but a great deal more must he fear him now, since he recognizes his merits, his sanctity and his power of intercession in heaven.

Patron of Priests and of Youths Aspiring to the Priesthood

St. Joseph is a very special patron of the sacred priesthood. In his relation to the Blessed Sacrament, how much the priest

resembles St. Joseph in his association with the Child Jesus! *As St. Joseph treated the Divine Child, just so the priest ought to treat the Holy Eucharist.* As St. Joseph nurtured and reared the first High Priest, Jesus Christ, so does he grant his special aid and protection to those whom God has chosen for the priesthood, as also to those who are preparing for this sublime vocation, provided they have recourse to him. As Patron of the Universal Church, he will lend his powerful assistance to *priests and students of theology.* What is of greater importance for the Universal Church than zealous and pious priests!

Numerous instances might be mentioned of the marvelous manner in which St. Joseph aided aspirants for the priesthood: in their studies, at their examinations, or in times of illness. For poor students, St. Joseph has often sought out benefactors; others he has delivered from doubts regarding their vocation. Many students possessing but little talent, and whose success was despaired of, made satisfactory progress in their studies after placing themselves under the special protection of St. Joseph. Later they became excellent priests,

for through the intercession of their glorious protector, the blessing of God rested upon their labors. Consequently, many seminaries and institutes for the education of youth have been placed under the protection of St. Joseph.

In an especial manner, *St. Joseph assists youths to preserve intact the delicate lily of chastity*, and to conquer temptations against holy purity. St. Joseph has obtained great favors of this nature for his clients. A youth who, at the beginning of his course of studies, places himself under St. Joseph's protection and daily implores his aid to preserve holy chastity, will not easily fall into the mire of sin as do so many young men in our days. Not until the dawn of eternity will they realize the deplorable consequences of the sins of their youth. *Ah, that in their temptations, youths would take refuge to St. Joseph!* Then they would not fall so deep, nor remain so long in this sad condition. How anxious St. Joseph is to be invoked and to lend his assistance in temptations is shown by the following incident.

One night, a young Carmelite brother who from his youth had preserved the an-

gelic virtue of chastity was, by God's permission, violently tormented with temptations against this delicate virtue. By the grace of God he finally emerged victorious from the combat. The next day he was sent on an errand to the city by his superior. On his way, he met a venerable old man who addressed him: "Brother, why did you not have recourse to St. Joseph last night in your fierce struggle with that temptation?" Filled with confusion by the consciousness that the innermost secrets of his heart were known to this venerable man, the religious tried to reply — but the stranger had vanished. The brother realized that it had been none other than St. Joseph himself who had appeared to him.

Ah, that all students and aspirants to the holy priesthood would have recourse to St. Joseph when tempted against the angelic virtue. For this purpose they should resolve to perform daily some definite devotion in his honor.

St. Joseph Obtains Fidelity to a Vocation

A young cleric, before receiving minor Orders, was troubled with violent temptations. He considered himself unworthy to be ordained for the priesthood, because he feared he might not persevere in it. He therefore resolved secretly to make his escape from the seminary.

Presently his gaze fell on a picture of St. Joseph hanging on the wall of his room. At once he felt encouraged to pray to St. Joseph in his trouble. As soon as he had finished his prayer, he felt relieved. Henceforth, as often as these annoying thoughts returned, he cast them away, and was soon delivered therefrom. He received Holy Orders, and has now for many years been active and zealous in the sacred ministry. He still frequently speaks of his great trial and says, "Had not St. Joseph come to my assistance, I should never have become a priest. Thanks and praise to my heavenly benefactor."

Go to Joseph!

Frequently those who love us and would like to confer benefits upon us are unable to do so. Not so with St. Joseph. The omnipotent Son of God, who on earth called him "Father," and in His heavenly kingdom ranks him next to Mary, *gave to St. Joseph more power than to any other saint in heaven.* The power of St. Joseph, like that of the Mother of God, is in a certain sense, an *omnipotent* power, but the power of a *pleading* omnipotence, for Our Lord refuses him nothing that he asks. Jesus is happy to receive his petitions, and

to grant them; it seems as though in heaven He still wishes to be subject to His foster father, as in the days of His earthly life.

He permits St. Joseph to take from His Divine treasury with full hands in order to pour out upon souls the treasures of Divine grace and mercy, as did Joseph, the son of Jacob, who took corn from the granaries of the king of Egypt to feed his brethren and all who had recourse to him. From the heights of heaven, the King of glory addresses to us the selfsame words which Pharaoh called out to the starving people of Egypt: "Go to Joseph!"

Go to Joseph, you who are poor and distressed, who struggle in want and misery. Like you, and even more than you, he experienced poverty, humiliation and want. He will sympathize with you in your suffering and will comfort you by obtaining for you the aid of Christian charity and the grace to be resigned to the will of God.

Go to Joseph, you who labor and till the soil, who bear the heat and burden of the day. He will teach you how to sanctify your labor and to make it profitable not only for this life, but above all for life

eternal. He will teach you how to make everything you do meritorious by offering it to God, by sanctifying Sundays and holydays, by uniting your hardships with those of the Divine Laborer of Nazareth.

Go to Joseph, Christian husband and wife; confide to him your grief, your sorrow, your anguish of soul. Choose him for your protector and that of your children. He will obtain for you the grace to live holily in the state of life which Divine Providence has assigned to you. He will teach you how to bring up your children not only for this world but above all for heaven, and to instil into their young hearts the love of God and of all virtues.

Go to Joseph, you who are consecrated to God, virgins and spouses of Jesus Christ. He will produce in you a glowing love for your Heavenly Bridegroom, the spirit of interior and vocal prayer, love for silence, for a secluded life, a greater contempt for the things of this world which you have renounced. He will obtain for you all those virtues which can beautify your soul and endear you to Him whose delight is to walk among lilies.

Go to Joseph, just and sinners, rich and poor. For the just, he will obtain the grace of perseverance and an increase of justice. For sinners, he will be a powerful intercessor. His arms and his heart have been the throne of Eternal Mercy, of the Mercy that became man in order to seek and to save sinners. Through his intercession you will find grace with God and become reconciled with Him who has promised that He will not despise a humble and contrite heart. And you who mourn and are distressed, go to Joseph; he will allay your grief and anguish, yes, even change it into joy. He experienced the trials and sufferings of this land of exile, and now, having entered the glories of heaven, he still has a truly compassionate heart for all.

Go to Joseph, you especially, who are prostrate on a bed of sickness; you, upon whom death is about to lay its icy hand; you, who even now feel death's chilling shadow with its sorrowful train of sufferings slowly approaching. He will alleviate your pain, calm your fears and lead you safely through the portals of eternity.

Prayers

A Short Novena

O GLORIOUS St. Joseph, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, to thee do we raise our hearts and hands to implore from the benign Heart of Jesus all the helps and graces necessary for our spiritual and temporal welfare, particularly the grace of a happy death, and the special grace we now implore. (Name it. . .)

O guardian of the Word Incarnate, we feel animated with confidence that thy prayers in our behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God.

Then the following versicle is to be said seven times in honor of the seven joys and seven sorrows of St. Joseph.

V. O glorious St. Joseph, through the love thou bearest to Jesus Christ, and for the glory of His Name,

R. Hear our prayers and obtain our petitions.

Litany of St. Joseph

LORD, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of heaven,*
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,

*Have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Ghost,*
Holy Trinity, one God,
Holy Mary,†
St. Joseph,
Illustrious son of David,
Light of the patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste protector of the Virgin,
Foster father of the Son of God,
Christ's valiant defender,
Head of the Holy Family,
St. Joseph, most just,
St. Joseph, most chaste,
St. Joseph, most prudent,
St. Joseph, most courageous,
St. Joseph, most obedient,
St. Joseph, most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of laborers,
Honor of domestic life,
Guardian of virgins,
Support of families,
Comfort of the suffering,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of the evil spirits,
Protector of our Holy Church,
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, **Spare us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, **Graciously hear us, O Lord.**

*Have mercy on us.
†Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, **Have mercy on us.**

V. He has made him the lord of His house,
R. And the ruler of all His possessions.

LET US PRAY

O God, who in Thy unspeakable Providence hast been pleased to choose St. Joseph as the spouse of Thy most holy Mother, grant, we beseech Thee, that as we venerate him as our protector on earth, so we may merit to have him as our intercessor in heaven, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Indulgence of 300 days, once a day. Pius X, March 18, 1909.

Petition for St. Joseph's Blessing

BLESS me, O dearly beloved father, St. Joseph, bless my body and my soul; bless my resolutions, my words and deeds, all my actions and omissions, my every step; bless all that I possess, all my interior and exterior goods, that all may redound to the greater honor of God. Bless me for time and eternity and preserve me from every sin.

Obtain for me the grace to make atonement for all my sins by love and contrition here on earth, so that, after my last breath, I may without delay, prostrate at thy feet, return thee thanks in heaven for all the love and goodness thou, O dearest father, didst show me here below. Amen.

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